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Equine Piroplasmosis (EP)

Equine Piroplasmosis (EP) has been detected in Florida. EP is a protozoan parasite generally transmitted by ticks. It is a reportable disease causing fever, inappetence, anemia, weight loss, and other clinical signs. Blood transfer from one horse to another can also spread the disease.

While EP is not known to be in Massachusetts, the Florida case should serve as a reminder to equine owners, caretakers, and veterinarians about proper biosecurity for our horses.

Tick control measures are important. Ticks also spread Lyme disease, which is present in New England. Horses should be checked regularly for ticks, which may be found around the head, throatlatch area, belly and under the tail. The ticks should be removed from the animal as soon as possible to deter tick-borne illnesses. Since ticks are found in areas that have tall grass, brush or woodpiles, mowing the pastures and removing the elements that may harbor rodents should reduce the risk of tick infestations. Proper use of insecticides may also help.

It is also important to use needles and syringes appropriately. Using the same needle or syringe on multiple animals can spread disease from one animal to another. In addition to the current concerns regarding the possible transmission of EP by reusing needles, other equine diseases such as Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) are also capable of being spread that way. It is never appropriate to use the same needle or syringe on two different animals.